

Opening Statement of
The Honorable Ken Calvert, Ranking Republican
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
***The Joint Planning and Development Office and the Next Generation Air
Transportation System: Status and Issues***
March 29, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling today's hearing to assess the progress of the Joint Planning and Development Office, and my thanks to our witnesses for taking time from their busy schedules to appear before us this morning.

Even though this subcommittee held our last hearing on JPDO just a year ago, in my mind Congress can't exercise enough oversight on such a critically important and fast-paced program, much to the dismay, I suppose, of the JPDO's leadership. But I think it speaks volumes about Congress' interest in ensuring the successful development of the next generation air traffic management system. Failure to keep pace with growth in air travel would be disastrous to our economy.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses to gain their candid assessment about progress made, and challenges remaining, in meeting the goals of the *Vision 100* legislation.

I know teams of federal and nonfederal experts have been working hard to put in place the processes and management structure required for such a massive undertaking, but in the few minutes I have remaining, I'll limit my comments to NASA's evolving role in air traffic management research.

When the *Vision 100* legislation was enacted, Congress anticipated that the Federal Aviation Administration, as the operator of our nation's ATM system, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as our nation's leading aeronautics R&D organization, would continue to work collaboratively as they have for more than forty years: NASA researching and developing long-lead, high risk technologies; FAA adapting their research products to incorporate them into the national airspace system. It has been a productive relationship, and over the years each agency has calibrated their R&D programs and budgets to reflect this collaboration. The JPDO recognized NASA's expertise early on by selecting them to lead the 'Agile Airspace' integrated product team.

In the last eighteen months, however, and subsequent to the creation of the JPDO, NASA's aeronautics R&D program has undergone a major reorganization. I don't dispute the rationale for making the reforms, but NASA also made a fundamental change in its R&D relationship with FAA by limiting future research to a level of technical maturity far lower than they have in years past. This has left the FAA with no recourse other than to cover the technology shortfall by increasing its own R&D budgets.

Money is fungible, but talent and expertise doesn't easily transfer, and simply stated my concern is that it will take FAA several years to adapt to this change. I remain concerned that so early in this grand endeavor now known as NextGen, one of the two key partners is changing the rules of the game, and it's happening at a time when R&D roadmaps are being finalized, and spending for developing and integrating new technologies is about to ramp up. I would strongly prefer that NASA's Airspace Management program continue to advance promising technologies to a high level, thus freeing FAA to focus on integrating them into NextGen.

It is my sincere hope that NASA's actions don't hinder JPDO's efforts to develop technologies upon which NextGen is reliant.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.